

Message Text

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21

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 NSCE-00

SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 IO-13 /065 W

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O R 181058Z APR 76

FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7282

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

USMISSION USUN

UNCLAS DAMASCUS 2352

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, SY, LE

SUBJECT: SYRIAN MEDIA REPORTING ON LEBANESE CIRIS - APRIL 18

1. LEBANON CONTINUED TO DOMINATE SYRIAN PRESS APRIL 18.
AL-BAATH HEADLINED, "FRANJIEH APPROVES AMENDMENT OF CONSTITUTION.
GENERAL OPTIMISM AFTER THE DAMASCUS AGREEMENT. CONSULTATIONS
CONTINUE TO END CRISIS WITHIN FRAMEWORK OF SYRIAN INITIATIVE."
LEAD ARTICLE IN AL-THAWRAH ASSERTED THAT FRANJIEH'S SIGNING
THE AMENDMNT, RESUMPTION OF CONTACTS AND CONSULTATIONS AND
RELAXATION OF TENSION HAD ALL COME ABOUT AS RESULT OF SYRIAN-
PLO AGREEMENT. ARTICLE NOTED THAT STEPS HAD BEEN TAKEN TO REVIVE
SUPREME MILITARY COMMITTEE IN ORDER TO CONSOLIDATE CEASE FIRE
AND RESTORE CALM AND STABILITY. COMMITTEE WAS EXPECTED TO
RESUME ITS ACTIVITIES WITHIN 48 HOURS.

2. AL-THAWRAH ARTICLE SAW CEASE FIRE AS IMPROVING AND PROVIDING
OPPORTUNITY TO HOLD PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS IN PEACEFUL
ATMOSPHERE. ELECTION PROCESS IS EXPECTED TO TAKE TEN DAYS.
AFP REPORT STATED PRIMIN KARAME HAD ANNOUNCED SUPPORT FOR
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ELIAS SARKIS AND LISTED OTHER CANDIDATES AS MICHEL KHOURY,

PIERRE HILOU, RAYMOND EDDE AND JEAN AZIZ.

3. ALL PAPERS CARRIED REPORTS FROM LEBANESE AND KUWAITI PAPERS WELCOMING SYRIAN-PALESTINIAN AGREEMENT.

4. SPEECH BY BAATH PARTY DAMASCUS BRANCH SECRETARY ALI AL-ASHGAR EVENING APRIL 17 AT EVACUATION DAY RALLY ATTACKED SINAI AGREEMENT AS "MOTHER OF SETBACKS -- ISOLATING GREAT EGYPTIAN ARMY FROM ARAB STRUGGLE, OPENING DOOR TO FLOOD OF NEW ARMS FOR ISRAEL AND CAUSING BLOODY EVENTS IN LEBANON AIMED AT DISMEMBERING IT AND CARRYING OUT GREAT PLOT AGAINST PALESTINIAN REVOLUTION AND ARAB NATION." COLUMNIST IN AL-BAATH ASSAILED ATTITUDE OF EGYPTIAN MEDIA TOWARD SYRIAN INITIATIVE, "AN ATTITUDE WHICH DOES NOT DIFFER FROM THAT OF ISRAEL." COLUMNIST ASSERTED THAT DURING SADAT'S EUROPEAN VISIT HE HAD URGED PRES. FRANGIEH TO REJECT SYRIAN INITIATIVE AND TURN TO US AS ONLY PARTY CAPABLE OF RESOLVING CRISIS. FRANGIEH AND ALL LEBANESE HAD REFUSED, "YET AMERICAN ENVOY ARRIVED LESS THAN 48 HOURS AFTER SADAT'S APPEAL. ACCORDING TO ARAB AND WORLD PRESS REPORTS, AMB. BROWN'S MISSION AIMS ONLY AT DIVIDING LEBANON INTO CANTONS AND PLACING IT UNDER IMPERIALIST CONTROL OR 'UN FLAG' AS WAS CASE IN KOREA AND ELSEWHERE."

5. IN HIS EASTER MESSAGE, GREEK CATHOLIC PATRIARCH MAXIMOS V PRAISED LEADING ROLE PLAYED BY SYRIA UNDER LEADERSHIP OF PRES. ASAD TO STOP FIGHTING IN LEBANON. HE REJECTED IDEA OF PARTITION AND REFUSED TO CONSIDER CIVIL WAR AS ONE BETWEEN CHRISTIANS AND MUSLIMS SINCE BOTH RELIGIONS "DISOWN WARMONGERS." WE IN THIS COUNTRY, HE SAID, ARE PREPARED TO PROTECT THE OPPRESSED REGARDLESS OF RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION.
MURPHY

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, CIVIL DISORDERS, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 18 APR 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: n/a
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 JAN 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976DAMASC02352
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760147-0402
From: DAMASCUS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760449/aaaabpee.tel
Line Count: 92
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: oatisao
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 07 JUL 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <07 JUL 2004 by SilvaL0>; APPROVED <17 SEP 2004 by oatisao>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SYRIAN MEDIA REPORTING ON LEBANESE CIRIS - APRIL 18
TAGS: PFOR, SY, LE
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006